

Congress's role in committing the United States to the agreement.

I only say this because we are now getting close to December and we have been through this so many times before, and this isn't going to be any different. There is going to be a difference, and that is that they are not going to attempt to do it by passing legislation. They want to circumvent Congress because they know Congress reports to the people and the people don't want this.

I can remember when global warming—when they had their annual Gallup poll every March. It used to be that when asked what were the critical concerns about America, global warming was always—in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005—between first and second place of the greatest concern. Do we know what it is today? Out of 15, it is number 15. So the people have caught on. They know it will be the largest tax increase in history and that it will not accomplish anything.

Mr. President, what is our timing situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are no time limitations.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I wish to make some other comments because something very good happened, and it is not normally the case. We passed the Defense authorization bill. Here we are in the midst of over two decades of wars and we are being challenged on all fronts—from national states to terrorist organizations and extremists to cyber and lone-wolf attacks. Our military is directly engaged in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and the demands that this country is placing on them continues to increase. It is greater than anything I have ever seen in the years I have been here and probably the greatest in history in terms of the numbers of threats to America from different countries.

Yesterday we voted to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, or the NDAA, for the 54th consecutive year. I have been worried. The last few years we ended up passing it not this early but passing it in December. If we had gone to December 31 in those years or even in this year, all of a sudden our people wouldn't get hazard pay and they wouldn't get reenlistment bonuses and we couldn't let that happen. So I am glad we did it earlier this year. I think it is the most important bill we pass every year.

It is our constitutional duty to provide oversight over the President and his administration. There is an old wornout document that nobody reads anymore. It is called the Constitution. If we read article I, section 8 of the Constitution, it tells us what we are supposed to be doing—No. 1, defending America, and No. 2, roads and highways. I am very glad we passed the highway bill. It is over in the House, and I am optimistic they will be able to pass it over there as well.

So the Constitution says the most important thing we do is defending America. It is our constitutional duty to do it.

The NDAA contains provisions that take care of military men and women—the pay, the benefits, the bonuses, the new starts, the reenlistment bonuses, military construction, and all of this stuff. This bill addresses things such as additional protections for victims of sexual assault. It is a good bill, and most of the members of this committee have been to the floor today and have talked about.

I just wanted to mention a couple of things that may have been overlooked by some of the other speakers. They should be focusing on accomplishing their missions instead of wondering if this bill authorizes spending priorities critical to our national security and supports the resources requirement of the Department of Defense. While this bill does not contain every provision that the Senate wanted, that I wanted, that the House wanted, and that the President would like to have, the final language is overall good policy for our national defense. It provides authorizations in a timely manner. This vital piece of legislation sets the course for our national security and provides for our Nation's nearly 2.1 million all-volunteer force.

I was a product of the draft many years ago. I have often said that is one of the things that this country probably ought to go back to. We wouldn't have a lot of the problems today if we had to have kids go through the discipline and the appreciation for our country. But nonetheless, this is an all-volunteer force, and it has worked beautifully.

I make it a point, when I go to Afghanistan or Iraq or Africa and these places where we have troops stationed, to sit down in the mess halls, to go out in the field and eat with them or listen to the problems they have and try to boost them up a little bit because they know that under this administration, which I have called the disarming of America, defending America is not the high priority that it should be. This is a time when each service chief, secretary, and combatant commander has testified that no service will be able to meet the wartime requirements under sequestration.

The President and many people in this body wanted sequestration to take place but only for domestic purposes as well as military, and we are saying this is where the problem is. Let's look at Secretary Carter, our Secretary of Defense. He said recently:

Readiness remains at troubling levels across the force. Even with the fiscal year 2016 budget, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps won't reach their readiness goals until 2020 and the Air Force until 2023.

At a time when former Secretary Hagel says—listen to this. I don't know why more people in America didn't hear this. This is the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Hagel, who said:

“American dominance in seas, in the skies, and in space can no longer be taken for granted.” This is America, and people are thinking that the President might even veto this bill.

Admiral Winnefeld, who is Vice Chief of Staff, said: “There could be for the first time in my career instances where we may be asked to respond to a crisis and we will have to say that we cannot.”

General Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says we are putting our military on a path where “the force is so degraded and so unready” that it would be “immoral to use it.”

General Dempsey labels it “unlike any in his lifetime.”

So the passage of this legislation is absolutely necessary. We have passed it. We have done the responsible thing. And I think we need to be sure that we use full pressure to make sure the President does not veto this bill, because he is toying with a veto.

We have never seen anything like this in the history of this country. We have a level of threat to America, and we are going to have to make sure that we pass this bill. I am very proud that it was passed by the majority in the Senate.

I know I am the last speaker tonight. I suggest the absence of a quorum, just to see if there is any last message that has to be given.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING COASTAL RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I wish to commend Coastal Ridge Elementary School in York, ME, on being named a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. This year, Coastal Ridge Elementary was one of only 335 schools across the country and one of only two schools from Maine to receive this prestigious recognition of high accomplishment by the U.S. Department of Education.

Created in 1982, the Blue Ribbon Schools Award honors schools that are either academically superior in their States or that demonstrate significant gains in student achievement. The schools singled out for this national recognition are models of high educational standards and accountability.